"We sell Hell, so suffer well!": Exploring 'positive' pathogenic possession

Andrew Dean
University of Sunderland
andrew.dean@sunderland.ac.uk

For the diabolical and righteous alike, the Devil has spent an eternity corrupting Creation and tempting the world into eternal damnation. While terrifying tales are often told about the Dark Lord forcefully possessing the minds and bodies of unfortunate souls, little is known about those who willingly embrace pathogenic possession to achieve 'positive' outcomes in this life and the next. As such, this unholy ethnography explicates how several demonic acolytes use the Devil as a malevolent self-making 'catalyst', and in so doing, attempt to thrive in evil, while maintaining their personal agency. Although pathogenic possession is frequently linked to misfortune and malady, key findings show that a union with the Devil can be immorally liberating, empowering the wicked to proselytise profane cosmological views. Importantly, however, with little global demand for eternal damnation, this sacrilegious practice appears relatively unmarketable, and likely to remain at the periphery of more wholesome religious offerings.

Key Words: Demonology; Devil; Evil; Ethnography; Possession

'In the beginning God created the heavens and the Earth… and… saw that it was good' (Genesis, 1.1-9). Yet, paradise was fleeting, as by Adam and Eve consuming the forbidden fruit, humanity fell from grace (Milton, 1996), and evil flourished throughout the universe (Kelly, 2006), at least as far as the faithful are concerned. With the Devil frequently being positioned as the architect of humanity's downfall and an ongoing source of temptation, it is hardly surprising that stories about this nefarious supernatural being have endured throughout the ages (McCraw, 2017). One area that continues to draw acute public concern is that of demonic possession, where the Devil invades an unsuspecting victim's mind and body, either pathogenically harming the individual, or executively taking over their thoughts and bodily functions (Bourguignon, 1976; Guthrie, 2017). While possession is often the focus of religious discourse, Hollywood movies, and a frightful topic for Halloween, it is increasingly recognised that little is known about individuals seeking positive outcomes from such experiences (Cohen, 2008), never mind through welcoming a fallen angel into their lives. As such, this study asks the thorny demonological question: *how do the diabolically inclined negotiate positive pathogenic possession?* (Rashed, 2018). To help answer this question, this ethnography considers the real or imagined experiences of several unholy acolytes working through their diabolical possession (Ozanne & Appau, 2019; Thomson, Wilson & Hoek, 2012). As a

© 2024 Journal for the Study of Religious Experience

ISSN: 2057-2301

starting point, the literature review examines the nature of the Devil as a possessing agent in 'Get thee behind me Satan: explicating the Devil' before exploring the particularly troublesome issue of 'making sense of an evil self'. Following this, the ethnographic methodology is detailed, alongside the discussion and conclusions, highlighting contributions to the literature, and suggestions for further research.

Get thee behind me Satan: explicating the Devil

It is difficult to find a culture that does not have a religious tale of an ancient evil (Carus, 2016), capable of possessing (un)willing humans (Frazer, 1911; Oesterreich, 1921). Within Christianity, there is no greater evil than the Devil (McCraw & Arp, 2017), who has several names including, Lucifer, Satan, Prince of Darkness, and Father of Lies (Ashley, 1986). He is '…[the] lord of this world… [displaying] a vast multitude of powers…' (Russell, 1987, p. 247) such as '…throw[ing] wicked thoughts into our minds' and influencing our behaviours (Chilcot, 2010, p. 118). Ontologically, the Devil is an incorporeal spirit (Aquinas, 1997) and fallen angel (McCraw & Arp, 2017), eschatologically working to oppose God (Kelly, 2006) through tempting us all into sin and eventually Hell (Gardiner, 1989; Matthewes, 2001). In keeping with his duplicitous nature, the Devil's tactics involve normalising evil, mimicking the divine (Beaudoin, 2007), and performing 'great signs and wonders' (Matthew 24, p. 3-5), while playing 'the loveliest trick… to persuade you that he does not exist!' (Baudelaire, 2017, p. 1). Curiously, for a pivotal religious character, the Devil receives relatively little attention within the Bible (Maxwell-Stuart, 2011), meaning that most of what we know about his personality and behaviour is more likely to come from cultural depictions (Brown, 2011; Milton, 1996) rather than Scripture (McCraw & Arp, 2016). As such, and within this historic hotchpotch of diabolical depictions, we see the Devil described as beautiful and hideous, with or without wings, timeless, shapeshifting, but in nearly all cases, having an evil intellect superior to humanity (Surin, 1986). Critically, though, not all portrayals of the Devil are negative (Kelly, 2006), with the latter part of the last millennium suggesting that the Devil might be better considered an anti-hero and rebel committed to helping humanity escape divine domination (Milton, 1996; Surin, 1986).

Being an immaterial spirit, the Devil must possess a human host to meaningfully engage with the physical world (Ferber, 2004; Oldridge, 2019; Resseguie, 2005). This has typically been through pathogenic or executive possession, with the former generally harming the individual's physical and mental wellbeing, whereas the latter takes over the host's mental and bodily functions, while often eviscerating their sense of self (Cohen, 2008; Rashed, 2020). In both cases, the possessed can be left struggling with their day-

© 2024 Journal for the Study of Religious Experience

ISSN: 2057-2301

to-day lives, and trying to avoid sacred signs, words, and objects (Katajala-Peltomaa & Niiranen, 2014; Russell, 1986). At the heart of diabolical possession is the goal of frustrating God's plan for the cosmos by invoking cruelty, spite, and malice (Russell, 1988). While there is much debate about how the Devil possesses a human body (Lewis, 2003), the historic view is that evil spirits can be accidentally consumed (de Vitry, 2015), or that the Devil can force entry through a bodily orifice (Elliot, 1999). In both ways, the possessed have often been considered innocent victims (Katajala-Peltomaa & Niiranen, 2014), and while it is generally believed that demons cannot penetrate the soul, they debase their hosts' minds and bodies, and in so doing, lead them into spiritual darkness (Dawe, 1963; Sandu & Caras, 2014).

Although cutting against popular cultural stereotypes, there is a growing argument that demonic possession can be advantageous, at least in a minor number of cases, allowing individuals to explore who they are, while seeking preferred psychological outcomes (Cohen, 2008; Huskinson, 2010). Coupled with this, is the rarer suggestion that possessions can trigger 'heightened capacities and powers' for the hosts, with much debate about whether these experiences might be more magical or mundane in nature (Rashed, 2000, p. 365). Through a Christian lens, it is possible to view the Devil as a metaphysical opposite of the Holy Spirit, providing dark spiritual 'fruits' for those willing to commit to evil. Functionally, and as we will come to see, pathogenic possession is an opportunity for the malevolent to renegotiate their cognitive and embodied limits within an evil existence.

Finally, although many may find the notion of the Devil and demonic possession indicative of delusion or charlatanism (Frazer, 1911; Johnson, 2017), we should remember that beliefs in the Devil have been relatively constant throughout history (Baker, 2008), and that 18 % of the UK are currently convinced that the Devil is real (Jordan, 2013). Furthermore, when we consider that 1 % of the UK routinely speak to spirits (Glanville, 2018), and that supernatural experiences are increasingly common (Waldstein, 2019), and sought after (Luhrmann, 2012), it would be myopic to relegate otherworldly beings to a bygone era. As such, you are invited to suspend disbelief, or at least consider the demonic reality of the participants, who view the Devil as the literal source of evil, and rightful sinful ruler of this world (Corinthians, 2. 4:4).

Making Sense of an Evil Self

To live in the world is to know evil, either as something that befalls us or something we facilitate, and it usually occurs through natural disasters, illness, death, pain, deception, violence, or immorality (Arendt, 2006). Why evil exists within the cosmos is typically

© 2024 Journal for the Study of Religious Experience

ISSN: 2057-2301

addressed through moral philosophy and/or theology (Surin, 1986), with ongoing debates about whether evil is the work of the Devil, disobedience to God's will, or just an unfortunate metaphysical consequence of how this less than perfect universe works (Meister & Dew, 2011). Theologically, evil arises as we move away from God's grace and goodness (Chiang, 2016), corrupting who we are and negatively skewing our sense of ourselves and the world (Augustine, 1992). Critically, the Devil is often viewed as the driving force behind much, if not all the evil in the world, and worryingly for those who spend a lifetime enacting evil, there is an afterlife in Hell awaiting them (Dante, 2012). While some struggle to believe that a good God would allow evil to exist in this universe (Kane, 1980), it can be argued that evil is a logical necessity (Russell, 1988), giving humanity the moral freedom to explore who we are in relation to God and the Devil (Augustine, 1992; Hick, 2010).

How we make sense of ourselves within a mundane or supernatural universe is of course a critical issue, negotiated through our cultural norms, what we think is possible, plausible, and just as importantly, desirable (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014, p.11). This process is known as identity work, where we ask ourselves who we metaphysically want, and do not want to be (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Fisher, 1989; Snell, 2002; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). As Messeri (2021, p. 340) argued, even fantasy can be 'incorporated into [our] knowledge systems' and become a cornerstone for what we believe. Consequently, what we say, think, and listen to are crucial parts of how we understand ourselves and our place in the cosmos (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Mikkelsen, 2013). For the religiously devout, what is real is often a matter of faith (Lewis, 1964), with preferred personal and doctrinal views holding more epistemological weight than sensory ways of knowing (Ellis & Hopkinson, 2010, p. 414). It is not uncommon, however, for secular-materialist perspectives to jostle with supernatural beliefs, and for both to undermine each other (Curry, 1999; Lindeman & Aarnio, 2007; Macy, 2005). Importantly, though, within this ongoing journey of self, we have variable degrees of agency (Watson, 2008; Wright, Nyberg & Grant, 2012), which oscillate in relation to the people we meet, and cultures we exist within (Essers & Benschop, 2007; Pratt, 1998). As might be expected, who we claim to be tends to be critical, particularly within religious life (Coşgel & Minkler, 2004), with those plausibly arguing that they can access esoteric knowledge, speak to spirits, and transform themselves being able to exert considerable power over those who cannot (Luhrmann et al., 2010; Purchase et al., 2018). Finally, the religious choices we make about ourselves are not necessarily free from public critique, as worshipping the Devil, for example, is likely to invite stigmatisation and othering (McCraw & Arp, 2017).

Methodology

© 2024 Journal for the Study of Religious Experience

ISSN: 2057-2301

This six-month hybrid ethnography (Lofland & Lofland, 1995) arose from my having spent over a decade engaging in supernatural communities, where I became aware that demonic acolytes were trying to transform their identities via communing with the Devil to spread a personalised doctrine of sin. Importantly, such proselytising was not through formalised church structures or doctrines, but rather through the participants acting as lone 'preachers'. With little known about this issue, this study was undertaken to answer the research question: *how do the diabolically inclined negotiate positive pathogenic possession*? Drawing on my contacts from within these communities, I was able to position myself as a seasoned and trusted insider (Layton, 1988; McCracken, 1998), which brought me into contact with seven UK-based individuals claiming to be positively possessed by the Devil. Table 1 shows the pragmatic, purposeful and anonymised sample that this study was built around (Wengraf, 2004).

Participant characteristics	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Gender:		
Male	5	71
Female	2	29
Age (years):		
18-30	2	29
31-40	2	29
41-50	3	42
Education		
School	1	14
Bachelor's degree	4	57
Master's and above	2	29
Religion		
Devil worship	7	100
Satanist	0	0
Previous religion		
Christianity	7	100
Other	0	0
Cultural Christian		
Yes	7	100
No	0	0
Motivation		
Rejection of God	7	100
Moral freedom	7	100
Supernatural power	7	100
Mundane power	7	100
To embrace evil	7	100

Table 1 – Participant information.

© 2024 Journal for the Study of Religious Experience

ISSN: 2057-2301

Examining Table 1 we see the sample fitting reasonably well with the average profile of being well educated religious evangelists (Margalit, 2004). Intriguingly, though, while this sample is predominantly male, it must be noted that women are more likely to claim to be possessed by spirits, which contradicts this sample's demographic (Cohen, 2007). Importantly, while no participant overtly identified as a priest, there was an ongoing discussion about whether this identity might be embraced in the future.

With this sample growing up in the UK, all participants were considered cultural Christians, having received this form of instruction within their schools and churches (Bialecki, Haynes & Robbins, 2008; Moffat & Yoo, 2019). While this might seem a strange stance for those who worship the Devil, we should remember that knowledge of the supernatural tends to be constrained and shaped by the cultures individuals exist within (Luhrmann et al., 2010), which typically influences the sense made and identities claimed (Dean, 2019). Finally, and while popular culture may erroneously depict Satanists as Devil worshippers (Hill, 2007), this sample is not Satanic, as Satanists rarely believe the Devil is real (Harvey, 1995), and instead, tend to be secular atheists (Taub & Nelson, 1993).

Fieldwork and Data Collection

After securing access to this sample, I spent approximately six months interacting with these seven individuals via a hybrid ethnography, using participant observation, including semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, and participant storytelling (Lofland & Lofland, 1995; McCracken, 1988; Schouten, McAlexander & Koenig, 2007). Importantly, these individuals did not know each other, meaning that most of my time was spent interacting with this sample on a one-to-one basis throughout their daily lives, including diabolical prayer, worship, and religious marketing. To help answer the research question, data was also collected by a VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) ethnography, using Skype, WhatsApp, e-mail, text, and phone (Fetterman, 2010; Iacono, Symonds & Brown, 2016), to allow the participants to speak whenever they felt inclined to do so. Although I attended ritualistic worship, prayer, and celebrations, I was not required to worship the Devil. While this might have created distance and hindered the research findings, this appeared not to be the case, as having a background in demonology, I was granted a high-level of access and welcome.

The variety of data collection approaches was considered critical for being able to explore the fine-grain processes of positive possession (Reissman, 2008). This led to over 800 pages of field notes, alongside over 1,000 pages of transcripts, based on 85 direct interviews, and 332 informal conversations. The mean number of words recorded per participant was just over 11,000, split between all forms of data collection. While the

© 2024 Journal for the Study of Religious Experience

ISSN: 2057-2301

primary focus of data collection was on utterances, attention was also paid to recording intonations, body language, and the context of interactions, alongside potential meanings in relation to my experiences with the participants and the extant literature. Finally, all participants only spoke as themselves, and rejected that the Devil spoke through them.

Working the Data

After the data was collected, it was read several times before being transcribed, with further comments added from memory where appropriate (Lindlof, 1995). To aid the robustness of this process and my sensitisation to emerging themes (Goodier & Eisenberg, 2006), the data was analysed immediately after collection, again after three months, and then finally after seven months (Spiggle, 1994). The first stage of analysis sought to categorise units of meaning via content analysis, with codes changed, added, or removed as necessary (Miles & Huberman, 1984; Spiggle, 1994), supported by my emic and etic experiences (Kottak, 2006). Following this, discourse analysis was undertaken (Wood & Kroger, 2000), which allowed a greater focus on abstraction, to elucidate the participant's discursive resources to erode or concretise notions of reality, particularly in relation to sense and self (Foucault, 1974). Throughout this time, I remained acutely aware of the need to engage in 'reflexive pragmatism' (Alvesson, 2003, p.14), which was carried out by using written vignettes to explore competing religious interpretations (Humphreys, 2005). Findings were validated using within method triangulation (Denzin, 1970), and were also shown to the participants via a summary report, followed by face-to-face meetings to discuss research outcomes (Aitken & Campelo, 2011). Finally, peer debriefing was undertaken to help the participants become stakeholders within knowledge generation and management (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Findings

Although the Devil is an infamous religious character, relatively little is known about those who seek to embrace His Infernal Majesty through positive pathogenic possession. As such, this ethnography attempted to address this issue by examining the participant motivations for 'being called into evil', before exploring the thornier issues of 'developing a diabolical identity: being demonically possessed'. Finally, attention is paid to the challenge of 'proselytising an unholy religion' within a hyper competitive religious marketplace.

Being Called into Evil

© 2024 Journal for the Study of Religious Experience

ISSN: 2057-2301

When we consider that both popular culture and the Bible depict an eternity of suffering for those who follow the Devil's profane teachings, we might wonder what motivated these participants to consciously walk a path of evil. Within itself, this is an intriguing moral and eschatological question, particularly when we see that the participants had not sought evil in the abstract but rather through a direct embodied union with the Devil, i.e., via positive pathogenic possession. Helping us start to understand this damnable attraction to the Devil, David said:

> I hated being Christian as a boy. For years, I had to learn about God in church and school. I mean I always believed in God and still do, but I don't think God should be worshipped. Have you ever read the Bible? How can anyone want to follow those teachings? Be poor. Give up power. No lust. How can anyone want to live like that? Think about it, what life does a Christian really have? They are slaves to God, impoverished for life. Trying to be good. Humanity should reject this. [Pause]. Adam and Eve eating the forbidden fruit liberated us. The Devil freed us from divine slavery. Made us think. Gave us choices. [Pause]. Even as a child I recognised the value in lies and cheating. This is how you move forward in life. I've always been hungry for money and power. Mmm, a fast car, big house, and perfect health. D'you hear me on this? Sin equals freedom. Our gift from Adam and Eve. [Pause]. Ah, but I didn't just want physical stuff. I wanted to be smarter. Have true power, and you get this from evil. [Pause]. Being good would only get in my way. Having been a Christian, I knew the Devil was my route to everything I wanted. [Pause]. The Devil is my saviour.

Although the presence of evil is well known for undermining beliefs in the existence of God, this sample appeared to have little doubt that God is real. Having said this, no participant sought to worship God, or bind themselves to the Christian doctrine, and instead, argued that God's law is oppressive, and removes humanity's freedom to enjoy the (im)moral pleasures of the mind and flesh. This was particularly noticeable from all participants malevolently seeking to enhance their power, intellect, and social status through the Devil. As such, this sample's desires for evil were hardly a 'motiveless malignity' (Coleridge, 1987, p. 315), but rather, an attempt to step beyond the perceived limitations of goodness and embrace new diabolic ways of being in this world and beyond. Critically, however, this sample remained culturally Christian, selectively mixing Scriptural knowledge with popular cultural resources to support their preferred views of the Devil, and themselves. Most striking, was the belief that the Devil should be reframed

© 2024 Journal for the Study of Religious Experience

ISSN: 2057-2301

as a malevolent anti-hero working to liberate the cosmos. Intriguingly, though, when we consider that Divine eternal punishment supposedly awaits those willing to stray from the light, we might question if there was any fear of retribution in the afterlife. Commenting on this matter Stuart argued:

> Most people say that worshipping the Devil leads to an eternity in Hell. [Pause]. The big question is, do I think I'm going to Hell? [Laughs]. Absolutely yes! [Exclaims]. I know I'm going to Hell. But I won't be tortured. [Pause]. Mmm, I don't want to go to Heaven. Why would I? Spend forever bowing and scraping to God. Have you thought about what happens if you go to Heaven? No freedom there at all. If you read The Divine Comedy [Dante, 2012], you will see there are many layers of Hell. And one of them is pretty good. Kind of like here actually. [Earth]. And do you know what? I get to be me forever. If I go to Heaven, I'd be transformed, changed, forced to abandon my hatred, pain, and sexuality. This bad stuff is what makes me who I am. So, I want the Devil to increase my mortal pleasure and give me a dark paradise in Hell. [Pause]. I'd always dreamt of the Devil. [Pause]. It was like he was beckoning me. Wanting me to join with him. Thoughts kept popping in my head that if I let him into my life, he'd give me power and riches forever, like in that play. [Possible reference to Marlowe's Faustus (2010)]. I'd always believed in the Devil. Had prayed to him. Begged him to appear. [Pause]. Then one day Lucifer said: "What I promised Jesus, I now promise you. All this I will give you…if you will bow down and worship me" [a partial rephrasing of the Devil's temptation of Christ in the desert (Matthew 4. 1-11)]. Hearing this, I welcomed him. My unwavering faith and desire helped me believe all of this was true.

While claiming to be called into a religious life by a spirit is not uncommon, such otherworldly experiences tend to orientate individuals towards Heaven rather than Hell. Even though Hell is certainly an unusual eschatological preference, it was clear that all participants feared God's forgiveness and the subsequent loss of their dearly held malign natures should they go to Heaven. At the heart of this issue was the intense belief that the Devil is willing to negotiate various aspects of this life and the next, whereas God's laws for humanity are absolute. Examining why the participants thought this way revealed a rich variety of 'cherry picked' theological and cultural beliefs used to support preferred views that parts of Hell are akin to life on Earth, allowing the potential for social elevation and intense immoral pleasure. Finally, although religious beliefs and experiences can easily create a knot of epistemological tensions about what is real in this world and the

© 2024 Journal for the Study of Religious Experience

ISSN: 2057-2301

next, this sample seemed to sidestep this issue by embracing fideism, and in so doing, proceeded to develop their diabolical notions of self.

Developing a Diabolical Identity: Being Demonically Possessed

The idea that humans and spirits can interact on this material plane spans at least several thousand years, with the common suggestion being that the Devil can occupy our bodies and minds, and as such, corrupt how we view ourselves and the world around us. With a poverty of understanding about the process of positive pathogenic possession, this section explores how the participants negotiated this unholy form of identity work. Detailing the salient parts of her experience, Daisy said:

> There are some things that everyone knows. Spirits aren't physical and you can't really see them in this world. The Devil is the same. Everyone knows he needs a body to live here. Lots of people say this online. I read it all. [Pause]. Having felt his dark presence my entire life, I knew I wanted to join with him properly. Mmm, I was nervous though. As the last thing I wanted was to be hollowed out, and to lose self-control of myself. [Reference to executive possession]. I've watched the movies; seen how he can rip a human apart. Use them as a puppet and destroy their life. Make them sick. [Reference to negative pathogenic possession]. I've also seen how he can empower, give spectacular powers and gifts. You know, the Bible talks about the transformative power of God. I did the other version with the Devil. [Pause]. I can't explain this very well, but it felt like a darkness spreading over me as the months passed by. It was incredible. I'd never felt so free. Every day was an opportunity to re-examine who I was. Not many people get to be who they want to be and see the world through new fallen eyes. So, I've been burning away the last bits of goodness in me ever since. Don't get me wrong, I never sold my soul to him. It's more a partnership. I wear him like an evil cloak. He is like a wicked liquid flowing through me. We both get what we want.

Such statements show how this sample had sought to move beyond wishful supernatural thinking to committing themselves to experiencing the Devil's presence within their minds and bodies, albeit in a personally controlled way. Importantly, there was no complex epistemological negotiation of diabolical fact from fiction within any of their possessions, only an unshakeable faith in what the participants wanted to be true. Furthermore, with so much of the possessive process taking place within the participants, it was almost impossible to validate any otherworldly claim, which was compounded by the participants

© 2024 Journal for the Study of Religious Experience

ISSN: 2057-2301

often struggling to meaningfully articulate the philosophical basis of their otherworldly experiences. Yet, this seemed to suit the participants well, as a limited understanding of the universe was frequently linked to the Devil's powers being backgrounded within their lives, in turn seemingly leaving the participants with greater control over their minds and bodies. Intriguingly, though, this self-regulated form of possession continually provided opportunities to explore this sample's malevolent identity work, as Sam commented:

> In a way, I've been born again. Am becoming who I want to be. From what I've seen and feel so far, this will continue forever. As far as I see it, we live our lives, between God and the Devil. Every act we take, every thought we make connects us to one and disconnects us from the other. And eventually takes us to Heaven or Hell. [Pause]. To maintain that spiritual link to the Devil, I have rejected goodness, God, and Heaven. The thing is, good and evil are fundamental forces, changing our bodies and minds. [Pause]. Even a drop of good can damage my link to the Devil. Might remove him from my life altogether if I'm not careful. [Pause]. So, I started small, rejecting anything I saw as good or Godly. Always reminding myself that being human is a fall from grace. Rejecting God at every stage. Serving my own needs above all others. Slowly, I started to feel different. Felt evil in me. I'd never felt like this before. It was like I was developing a new way of looking at everything. I am coming home to my true nature as a human being. Sin is power. I want to be smarter, better in every way. Without being controlled by him. [The Devil].

We thus come to see human nature oscillating between God and the Devil, driven by ongoing acts of (im)morality, with diabolical identity work continually orientating the spiritually fallen further towards Hell. Through this lens, goodness is a stumbling block to better embracing the darkness within, and to further joining with the Devil. Consequently, it was hardly surprising that the participants sought to annihilate all types of goodness within their lives, frequently fearing further contamination from this undesirable state of being. Trying to better understand how the participants nurtured their evil selves, there was little to suggest that any individual engaged in any wicked behaviours beyond condemning the notion of goodness and trying to subvert the wider world to reject God in favour of the Devil. While certainly a classical theodic perspective, the participants often struggled with how they could achieve greater diabolical power without ceding more of their self-control to the Devil. Problematically, this issue was rarely helped by limited cultural discourses on the mechanics of how to meaningfully negotiate positive pathogenic possession.

© 2024 Journal for the Study of Religious Experience

ISSN: 2057-2301

Drawing this area to a close, the following section examines how the participants felt compelled to serve the Devil as a condition of their positive pathogenic possession.

Proselytising an Unholy Religion

Reminding ourselves that the Devil is a much-maligned cultural character, typically dismissed as a mere metaphor, or the actual source of all evil in the universe, it is hardly surprising that there continues to be little religious interest in worshipping this real or imagined fallen angel. Intriguingly though, even against this troublesome cultural backdrop, this sample attempted to act as diabolical 'evangelists', promising unholy rewards and an eternity in Hell for all those willing to bow to their Dark Lord. Commenting on the desire to engage in this profane proselytising process, David said:

> All true believers like me must spread their faith. [Pause]. God's churches are everywhere, but none for the big guy in red [the Devil]. Satanists don't count as they don't even believe in Lucifer. [Pause]. I don't have a church. One day perhaps. [Pause]. In the meantime, I'm happy to be a fisher of men [paraphrasing the Gospel of Matthew 4:19]. [Pause]. The reality is that this is all part of my deal with Lucifer. Collect souls. Fill Hell up. Prove God is wrong by any means. Prove people love the flesh more than God's love. Demonstrate that we are all beyond God's salvation. But more than anything, show who Lucifer really is. Our saviour. Helping us live our lives sinfully as proper humans. Throwing away God's restrictive plan. No small challenge though. Mmm, should I fail, Lucifer will abandon me, and torture me for all time. Get on the wrong side of him and things end very badly. Problem is, nobody wants him. Not when they hear they will end up in Hell.

Listening to the sample speak, positive pathogenic possession kept the participants beholden to the Devil, particularly his wish for the sample to 'harvest enough souls'. As might be expected, this was an acute issue, especially when we consider that raising the ire of the Devil could leave this sample suffering within the bowels of Hell for all eternity. Having said this, each participant seemed to understand that selling the Devil as a method of acquiring souls was likely to remain a Sisyphean task, due to His Infernal Majesty's pervasive negative publicity. More bluntly, that few would seek an afterlife in the Inferno, irrespective of how 'temptingly' it was framed. Taking a broader demonological approach however, the participants showed little sign of being myopic malevolent marketers, and reflexively shifted their proselytising to duplicitously selling evil rather than the Devil. Although we might therefore view the participants as inadequate diabolical

© 2024 Journal for the Study of Religious Experience

ISSN: 2057-2301

marketers, this change in strategy seems to fit well with the Devil being the Father of Lies, and covertly seducing humanity into satisfying debased needs, as Steve discussed:

> Preaching about the Devil is tricky. Let me be honest. [Laughs]. If I do this, everyone calls me mad, a liar, or a fraud. Half the people think I'm completely bananas. [Pause]. Everyone demands solid proof. To see my magic. To see what riches the Devil gave me. And I can't show them, as I can't do these things yet. I'm sure I'll do it soon but not yet. [Pause]. I used to think it would be easier if the Devil would take over my body and speak for me. But then I wouldn't be me, would I? [Pause]. In the end I came to see that I don't need to sell him. People are afraid of him. Don't trust him. They've watched too many movies and think Hell is a bad place. Better to sell his beliefs, which is far easier. [Pause]. The Devil gets what he wants by me turning people away from God. Let me explain. I can tempt people into evil all day long if I don't use the words Devil or evil. People love to be evil, love to do evil, just don't want to admit it. We lack the courage to do it openly. Ah, but sneakily, now there is something. [Pause]. Virtually nobody wants to worship the Devil. Most can't grasp that the Devil is here to free us from God's plan. Wants to help us live freely, outside of morality. Under his rulership. Anyway, as long as I damage faith in God, and entice people to sin, the Devil gets them anyway, and I get what I want forever.

While there appeared to be little public interest in the Devil as a source of dark salvation or personal transformation, the participants frequently argued that they experienced much greater success in tactically turning the public away from God towards a broader path of evil. Having said this, while sin may be pleasurable, few wished to advertise their evil proclivities, fearing social ostracisation and stigmatisation, especially if linked to the Devil. It is worth reflecting, therefore, that although backgrounding the Devil within day-to-day preaching might increase the number of 'converts' to evil in an abstract sense, it seems unlikely to expand this age-old demonic religion's congregation size. As such, we should ruminate at length on the sustainability of Devil worship as a religious practice, particularly when it is rejected and mocked by nearly all members of the public.

Discussion and Conclusions

For thousands of years, the religiously inclined have sought to embed the otherworldly into their daily mundane lives, leaving ongoing debates about whether we might better consider such supernatural experiences fact or fiction. While intense scrutiny has been

© 2024 Journal for the Study of Religious Experience

ISSN: 2057-2301

paid to a myriad of phantasmagorical phenomena, there is still a poverty of understanding about human-spirit interactions (Cohen, 2007; Luhrmann, 2012), particularly those involving diabolical possession. This is a critical issue when we consider that possession has been the main vehicle for incorporeal demons to interact with humanity, either executively taking control of a host's body or pathogenically inducing negative embodied states, i.e., disease and misfortune (Cohen, 2007). Yet, more recent thinking suggest that possession can facilitate new 'positive' ways of being. Consequently, this unholy ethnography embraced the profane, and asked: *how do the diabolically inclined negotiate positive pathogenic possession?* It is worth saying, however, that while it is possible to dismiss the Devil as nothing more than a religious tall tale (Thomson, Wilson & Hoek, 2012), that beliefs in the Dark Lord still pervade the religious mind, irrespective of whether they are real or imagined (Jordan, 2013).

Although being called into a new religious life is not uncommon, such experiences tend to be driven more by the Divine than the Devil (Nel & Scholtz, 2016). While there is little extant data underpinning why this is the case, it seems likely that the Devil tends to be considered cruel, untrustworthy, and committed to hurting humanity, thus making him a dubious eschatological choice (Dante, 2012; Marlowe, 2010; McCraw & Arp, 2016). How the participants consequently came to crave this fallen angel was of course an acute issue, particularly when we consider that the Devil is ubiquitously regarded as a supernatural being best avoided. Yet, for the participants, the overarching goal was to reject God in favour of the Devil, and in so doing, achieve vast diabolical pleasures throughout this life and the next (Chiang, 2016; Hick, 2010). For this sample, this was hardly an unmet ethereal aspiration, as all claimed to have heard the Devil's wicked voice within their minds, promising an eternity of dark rewards providing they would host His Infernal Majesty via possession (Gardiner, 1989). However, without a defined demonic doctrine, the participants were left navigating a relatively unknown religious form of evil, trying to scaffold new beliefs from ancient Christian teachings of the Devil (Bialecki, Haynes & Robbins, 2008; Moffat & Yoo, 2019), reimagined through personal preferences for what might be true. Critically, therefore, while Christianity is viewed as 'an expansive science of the cosmos', where 'everything is explained in Christ's person' (Florovsky**,** 1978, p. 216-217), the participants reversed this model to make sense of all Creation and themselves through the Devil.

In keeping with popular culture and Scriptural depictions, the Devil was ontologically positioned as an immaterial fallen angel (Ramm, 1959), and while argued as having remarkable otherworldly powers (Russell, 1986), the participants seemed unable to meaningfully draw on any of them during this study. For the participants this was a thorny issue, as while all had sought positive pathogenic possession as a means of personal

© 2024 Journal for the Study of Religious Experience

ISSN: 2057-2301

empowerment, they were aware of the dangers of possession (Cohen, 2008), and consequently sought to limit the Devil's power over their agency and (im)material selves. Having said this, all participants remained committed to achieving their preferred evil identities (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003), by rejecting God, and embracing the Devil as an evil catalyst to further concretise their evil sense and self-making (McCraw & Arp, 2017). With no evidence to suggest any meaningful wrongdoing on the part of the participants beyond frustrating God's plan for humanity, it is possible to embed this sample's notion of evil within a quasi-Augustinian perspective where evil is simply the privation of God's goodness (Matthewes, 2001).

Finally, emphasising that Devil worship has commonly been viewed as eschatologically problematic for thousands of years, it seems fair to say that spreading this ancient form of religion was always likely to be a fraught and generally unsuccessful act (Jordan, 2013). As might be expected, the participants found it almost impossible for their diabolical proselytising to be taken seriously by a public that considers the Dark Lord as unreal, or the cause of all humanity's suffering (Ashley, 1986; Marlowe, 2010). Thus, while frequent attempts were made to rebrand the Devil as a salvific figure (Milton, 1996; Surin, 1986), such claims typically lacked cultural and religious plausibility, triggering widescale public rejection. This was further impeded by the sample failing to demonstrate any personal diabolical powers (McCraw & Arp, 2016), which usually led to the participants being labelled as delusional and charlatans (Frazer, 1911; Johnson, 2017). Yet, while marketing failures surrounding Devil worship were constant, the participants came to thrive in adopting 'false representations' of self (Hewlin, 2003, p. 634) and in duplicitously backgrounding their own faith to covertly seduce the public into committing Hell worthy thoughts and deeds (Beaudoin, 2007; Chilcot, 2010). Against this backdrop, a variety of demonic discursive tactics were operationalised, with the participants even denying the existence of the Devil, just to undermine faith in God as a supernatural being (Baudelaire, 2017). Not surprisingly, this shift in diabolical marketing was much more successful, as it turned on being able to induce doubt in the Divine, rather than the more troublesome task of signing up an unholy congregation. Problematically though, even if an efficacious approach for acquiring souls, it is hard to envisage how the participants could ever overcome the challenge of competing with more 'utopian' religious offerings. As such, it seems unlikely that this diabolical religion will move beyond being an underground practice of normalising sin.

Further Research

© 2024 Journal for the Study of Religious Experience

ISSN: 2057-2301

As this ethnography progressed, it became increasingly clear that the participants were keen to develop a deeper metaphysical understanding of their diabolical experiences, and just as importantly, their longer-term religious goals. Consequently, with an invitation to extend this work, further research will explore three salient research gaps from this study. The first area to be considered is the communicative interaction between the participants and the Devil, i.e., how what is said influences the nature of positive pathogenic possession, if at all. While it is recognised that developing a mind capable of 'speaking' and 'listening' to spirits can take time, further research will attempt to capture this longitudinal linguistic and mental process in relation to shifts in participant agency, consciousness, behaviour, and desired eschatological outcomes (Luhrmann, 2012). The second area will move beyond the participants to explore the public experience of unholy marketing, explicitly examining why individuals adopt or reject the Devil or evil in the abstract or concrete (Rogers, 2003). Within itself, this line of investigation is likely to offer key insights into how individuals attempt to metaphysically negotiate malevolent evangelising against their extant cultural norms and beliefs. Finally, attention will be paid to how the participants increasingly attempt to systematise their religious beliefs and practices, and potentially renegotiate core aspects of their diabolical selves. This latter aspect may be critical if the participants fail to achieve their heavily desired (super)natural powers, and social stigmatisation continues.

References

Aitken, R., & Campelo, A. (2011). The four Rs of place branding. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 27(11): 1-21.

Alvesson, M. (2003). Beyond neopositivists, romantics, and localists: A reflexive approach to interviews in organizational research. *Academy of Management Review*, 28: 13-33.

Aquinas, T. (1997). *The Summa Theologica in the basic writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company.

Arendt, H. (2006). *Eichmann in Jerusalem, a report on the banality of evil*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.

Ashley, L. R. N. (1986). Names of the Devil and some new applications of literary onomastic investigation. *Literary Onomastic Investigation*, 13(11): 127-170.

© 2024 Journal for the Study of Religious Experience

ISSN: 2057-2301

Augustine, St. (1992). *Confessions*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Baker, J. (2008). Who believes in religious evil? An investigation of sociological patters of belief in Satan, Hell, and demons. *Review of Religious Research*, 50(2): 206-220.

Baudelaire, C. (2017). *The generous gambler*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Beaudoin, J. (2007). The Devil's lying wonders. *Sophia*, 46, 111-126.

Bialecki, J., Haynes, N., & Robbins, J. (2008). The anthropology of Christianity. *Religion Compass*, 2(6): 1139-1158.

Bourguignon, E. (1976). *Possession*. Chandler & Sharp Series in Cross-Cultural Themes. San Francisco (CA): Chandler & Sharp Publishers.

Brown, D. R. (2011). The Devil in the details. A survey of research on Satan in Biblical studies. *Currents in Biblical Research*, 9(2): 200-207.

Carus, P. (2016). *The history of the Devil*. New York: Dover.

Chiang, T. (2016). *Arrival*. London: Picador.

Chilcot, W. (2010). *A practical treatise concerning evil thoughts: Wherein their nature, origin, and effect are distinctively considered and explained*. Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing.

Cohen, E. (2007). *The mind possessed. The cognition of spirit possession in an Afro-Brazilian religious tradition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cohen, E. (2008). What is spirit possession? Defining, comparing, and explaining two possession forms. *Ethnos. Journal of Anthropology*, 73(1): 101-126.

Coleridge, S. T. (1987). *The collected works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Volume 5: Lectures 1808-1819.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Corinthians, 2. 4:4. (2007). *NRSV Popular Text Bible with Apocrypha*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

© 2024 Journal for the Study of Religious Experience

ISSN: 2057-2301

Corley, K. G., & Gioia, D. A. (2004). Identity and ambiguity and change in the wake of a corporate spin-off. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 49(2): 173-208.

Coşgel, M. M., & Minkler, L. (2004). Religious identity and consumption. *Review of Social Economy*, 62(3): 339-350.

Curry, P. (1999). Magic vs. enchantment. *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 14(3): 401-412.

Dante, A. (2012). *The divine comedy: Inferno, purgatorio, paradiso*. London: Penguin Classics.

Dawe, D. G. (1963). *The form of a servant: A historical analysis of the kenotic motif*. Philadelphia: Westminster.

de Vitry, J. (2015). *The exempla: Or illustrative stories from the sermones vulgares*. London: Aeterna Press.

Dean. A. K. (2019). The enchanted snake and the forbidden fruit: The ayahuasca 'fairy tale' tourist. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 35(9-10): 818-844.

Denzin, N. K. (1970). *The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods*. Chicago, IL: Aldine.

Elliot, D. (1999). *Fallen bodies, pollution, sexuality, and demonology in the Middle Ages*. Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press.

Ellis, N., & Hopkinson, G. (2010). The construction of managerial knowledge in business networks: Managers' theories about communication. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 39: 413-424.

Essers, C., & Benschop, Y. (2007). Enterprising Identities: Female Entrepreneurs of Moroccan or Turkish Origin in the Netherlands'. *Organization Studies*, 28(1): 49-69.

Ferber, S. (2004). *Demonic possession and exorcism in early modern France*. London: Routledge.

© 2024 Journal for the Study of Religious Experience

ISSN: 2057-2301

Fetterman, D. M. (2010), *Ethnography: Step-by-step*, *Applied Social Research Methods Series, Volume 17*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Fisher, W. R. (1989). *Human communication as narration: Toward a philosophy of reason, value and action*. Columbia, NY: University of South Carolina Press.

Florovsky, G. (1978). *The Byzantine fathers of the sixth to eighth century: The collected works of Georges Florovsky*. Belmont, VA: Notable & Academic Books.

Foucault, M. (1974). *The history of sexuality: The will to knowledge v.1.* London: Penguin.

Frazer, J. G. (1911). *The Golden Bough*. London: MacMillan.

Gardiner, E. (1989). *Visions of Heaven and Hell before Dante*. New York, NY: Italica Press.

Genesis, 1.1-9. (2011). *NSRV. King James Bible*. New York, NY: Collins.

Glanville, B. (2018). Who are the people who speak with spirits? *YouGov*, August 28, https://yougov.co.uk/topics/lifestyle/articles-reports/2018/08/28/who-are-people-communicate-spirits. Last accessed 03/07/2020.

Goodier, B. C., & Eisenberg, E. M. (2006). Seeking the spirit: Communication and the (re)development of a “spiritual” organization. *Communication Studies*, 57(1): 47-65.

Guthrie, S. L. (2017). Christian demonology. A new philosophical perspective. In: W. McCraw, & R. Arp. *Philosophical approaches to demonology. Routledge studies in the philosophy of religion.*, (pp. 59 - 74). London: Routledge.

Harvey, G. (1995). Satanism in Britain today. *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 10(3): 283-296.

Hewlin, P. F. (2003). And the award for best actor goes to…: Facades of conformity on organizational settings. *Academy of Management Review*, *28*, 633-642.

Hick, J. (2010). *Evil and the love of God*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

© 2024 Journal for the Study of Religious Experience

ISSN: 2057-2301

Hill, M. (2017). Witches and demons: A comparative perspective on witchcraft and Satanism. *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 37(2): 355-356.

Humphreys, M. (2005). Getting personal: Reflexivity and autoethnographic vignettes. *Qualitative Inquiry,* 11: 840-860.

Huskinson, L. (2010). Analytical psychology and spirit possession: Towards a non-pathological diagnosis of spirit possession. In: E. Schmidt., & L. Huskinson. *Spirit Possession and Trance. New interdisciplinary perspectives*, (pp. 71 -96). London: Continuum Books.

Iacono, V. L., Symonds, P., & Brown, D. H. K. (2016). Skype as a tool for qualitative research interviews. *Sociological Research Online*, 21(2): 103-117.

Johnson, D. K. (2017). Justified belief in the existence of demons is impossible. In: W. McCraw, & R. Arp. *Philosophical approaches to demonology*, (pp. 175 – 191). *Routledge studies in the philosophy of religion.* London: Routledge.

Jordan, W. (2013). 18 % of Brits believe in possession by the devil. *YouGov*, September 27, https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/articles-reports/2013/09/27/18-brits-believe-possession-devil-and-half-america. Last accessed 07/07/2023.

Kane, S. (1980). Evil and privation. *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 11(1): 43-58.

Katajala-Peltomaa, S., & Niiranen, S. (2014). *Mental Dis(order) in later Medieval Europe*, Leiden: Brill.

Kelly, H. A. (2006). *Satan: a biography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kottak, C. (2006). *Mirror for humanity*. NY: McGraw-Hill.

Layton, R. (1998). *An introduction to theory in anthropology*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Lewis, C. S. (1964). *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on prayer*. London: G. Bles.

© 2024 Journal for the Study of Religious Experience

ISSN: 2057-2301

Lewis, I. M. (2003). *Ecstatic religion: A study of shamanism and spirit possession.* London: Routledge.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. London: SAGE Publications.

Lindeman, M., & Aarnio, K. (2007). Superstitious, magical and paranormal beliefs: An integrative model. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 41(4): 731-744.

Lindlof, T. (1995). *Qualitative communication research methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lofland, L., & Lofland, J. (1995). *Analysing social settings*. Belmont: Wadsworth.

Luhrmann, T. M. (2012). *When God talks back. Understanding the American evangelical relationship with God*. New York: Vintage Books.

Luhrmann, T., Nusbaum, H., & Thisted, R. (2010). The absorption hypothesis: Learning to hear God in evangelical Christianity. *American Anthropologist*, 112(1): 66-78.

Macy, G. (2005). *The banquet's wisdom. A short history of the theologies of the Lord's supper*. Ashland City: OSL Publications.

Maitlis, S., & Christianson, M. (2014). Sensemaking in organizations: Taking stock and moving forward. *Academy of Management Annals,* 8: 57-125.

Margalit, N. (2004). Priestly men and invisible women: Male appropriation of the feminine and the exemption of women from time-bound commandments. *AJS Review*, 28(2): 297-316.

Marlowe, C. (2010). *Doctor Faustus*. London: Penguin Classics.

Matthew, 4:1-11/24: 3. (2007). *NRSV Popular Text Bible with Apocrypha*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Matthewes, C. T. (2001). *Evil and the Augustinian tradition*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

© 2024 Journal for the Study of Religious Experience

ISSN: 2057-2301

Maxwell-Stuart, P. G. (2011). *Satan. A biography*. Stroud: Amberley Publishing.

McCracken, G. (1998). *The long interview*. Newbury Park: Sage.

McCraw, W. (2017). Augustine and Aquinas on the demonic. In: W. McCraw, & R. Arp. *Philosophical approaches to demonology*, (pp. 23 - 38). *Routledge studies in the philosophy of religion.* London: Routledge.

McCraw, W., & Arp, R. (2016). *Philosophical approaches to the Devil. Routledge studies in the philosophy of religion.* London: Routledge.

McCraw, W., & Arp, R. (2017). *Philosophical approaches to demonology. Routledge studies in the philosophy of religion.* London: Routledge.

Meister, C., & Dew Jr, J. K. (2011). *God and the problem of evil*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press.

Messeri, L. (2021). Realities of illusion: tracing an anthropology of the unreal from Torres Strait to virtual reality. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 27: 340-359.

Mikkelsen, E. N. (2013). A researcher's tale: How doing conflict research shapes research about conflict. *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal*, 8(1): 33-49.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1984). *Qualitative data analysis, a sourcebook of new methods*. CA: SAGE Publications.

Milton, J. (1996). *Paradise Lost*. London: Penguin Books.

Moffat, J., & Yoo, H. I. (2019). Religion, religiosity and educational attainment: Evidence from the compulsory education system in England. *Applied Economics*, 52(4): 430-442.

Nel, M., & Scholtz, E. (2016). Calling, is there anything special about it? *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 1-7.

Oesterreich, T. K. (1930). *Possession: Demoniacal and other among primitive races in Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and Modern Times*. London: Kegan Paul.

© 2024 Journal for the Study of Religious Experience

ISSN: 2057-2301

Ozanne, J. L., & Appau, S. (2019). Spirits in the marketplace. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 35(5-6): 451-466.

Oldridge, D. (2019). Demons of the mind: Satanic thoughts in seventeenth-century England. *The Seventeenth Century*, 35(3): 277-292.

Pratt, M. G. (1998). To be or not to be: Central questions in organizational identification. In: Whetten D. and Godfrey, P. (eds), *Identity in organizations: Developing theory through conversations* (pp. 171-207). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Purchase, S., Ellis, N., Mallett, O., & Theingi, T. (2018). Religious social-identities in the hybrid self-presentations of Sikh business people. *British Journal of management*, 9(1): 99-117.

Ramm, B. (1959). *The witness of the Spirit*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Rashed, M. A. (2020). More things in Heaven and Earth: Spirit Possession, mental disorder, and intentionality. *Journal of Medical Humanities*, 41(3), 363-378.

Reissman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences.* London: Sage Publications.

Resseguie, J. L. (2005). *Narrative criticism of the New Testament: An introduction*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.

Rogers, E. (2003). *Diffusion of innovations* (3rd Ed). New York: The Free Press.

Russell, J. B. (1986). *Mephistopheles. The Devil in the modern world.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Russel, J. B. (1987). *The Devil: Perceptions of evil from primitive antiquity to Christianity*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Russell, J. B. (1988). *The Prince of Darkness. Radical evil and the power of good in history*. London: Cornell University Press.

© 2024 Journal for the Study of Religious Experience

ISSN: 2057-2301

Sandu, A., & Caras, A. (2014). Appreciative Christian counselling. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 128: 87-92.

Schouten, J. W., McAlexander, J. H., & Koenig, H. F. (2007). Transcendent consumer experience and brand community. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 35(3): 357-368.

Snell, R. S. (2002). The learning organization, sensegiving and psychological contracts: A Hong Kong case. *Organizations Studies*, 23(4): 549-569.

Spiggle, S. (1994). Analysis and interpretation of qualitative data in consumer research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21: 491-503.

Surin, K. (1986). *Theology and the problem of evil*. Eugene: OR: Basil Blackwell Ltd.

Sveningsson, S., & Alvesson, M. (2003). Managing managerial identities: Organizational fragmentation, discourse and identity struggle. *Human Relations*, 56: 1163-1193.

Taub, D. E., & Nelson, L. D. (1993). Satanism in contemporary America: Establishment or underground? *The Sociological Quarterly*, 34(3): 523-541.

Thomson, G., Wilson, N., & Hoek, J. (2012). Pro-tobacco content in social media: The Devil does not have all the best tunes. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 50(4): 319-320.

Waldstein, A. (2019). Smoking as communication in Rastafari: reasonings with 'professional' smokers and 'plant teachers'. *Ethnos*, 85(5): 900-919.

Watson, T. (2008). Managing identity: identity work, personal predicaments and structural circumstances. *Organization,* 15: 121-143.

Wengraf, T. (2004). *Qualitative research interviewing: Biographic narrative and semi structured methods.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Wood, L. A., & Kroger, R. O. (2000). *Doing Discourse Analysis: Methods for studying action in talk and text.* London: SAGE Publications.

© 2024 Journal for the Study of Religious Experience

ISSN: 2057-2301

Wright, C., Nyberg, D., & Grant, D. (2012). 'Hippies on the third floor': climate change, narrative identity and the micro-politics of corporate environmentalism. *Organization Studies*, 33: 1451-1475.

© 2024 Journal for the Study of Religious Experience

ISSN: 2057-2301